Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior visions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (previously presented) A method of applying a metal coating to graphite, comprising the steps of:

anodic etching said graphite in an alkaline etchant;

Pd seeding said graphite; and then

electroplating said graphite with a metal to form the metal coating on said graphite.

2. (canceled)

3. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~after~~ during the Pd seeding, a Pd coating is formed on said graphite, and the method further comprising the following step between said Pd seeding and said electroplating:

electroless plating said graphite to reinforce said Pd coating.

4. (previously presented) The method of claim 3, wherein at least Ni or Cu is deposited in said electroless plating step.

5. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the following step between said anodic etching and a subsequent step:

directly transferring said graphite, obtained with said anodic etching step, into water or a weak aqueous solution.

6. (previously presented) The method of claim 5, wherein between said anodic etching and said electroplating no ultrasound treatment is implemented.

7. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said ~~electroplating involves at least~~ metal is one of the following metals: Ag, Cu, Ni and Sn.

8. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said electroplating utilizes a current density in the range of 0.1 to 10 A/dm^2.

9. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein a current duration in said electroplating is in the range of 5 to 90 minutes.

10. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said alkaline etchant is a solution of at least one of NaOH and KOH having a concentration in the range of 10 to 70% by weight.

11. (previously presented) The method of claim 10, wherein said anodic etching is done at a temperature in the range of 20°C to 70°C.

12. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said graphite comprises graphite particles bound by plastics.

13. (previously presented) A method of fabricating a solder connection to a graphite component, comprising the steps of:

electroplating, by said method of claim 1, said metal coating on said graphite component; and

applying a solder pad to said metal coating as thus produced.

14. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said anodic etching is performed with an applied electrical potential in the range of 4V to 20V.

15. (previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said anodic etching has a duration in the range of 5 to 90 minutes, with the actual duration being inversely proportional to the applied electrical potential.

16. (previously presented) A method of applying a metal coating to graphite, comprising the steps of:

anodic etching said graphite in a solution of at least one of NaOH and KOH having a concentration in the range of 10 to 70% by weight; and then

electroplating said graphite with a metal to form the metal coating on said graphite.

17. (previously presented) A method of applying a metal coating to graphite, said graphite comprising graphite particles bound by plastics, the method comprising the steps of:

anodic etching said graphite in an alkaline etchant; and then

electroplating said graphite with a metal to form the metal coating on said graphite.

18. (previously presented) A method of fabricating a solder connection to a graphite component, comprising the steps of:

anodic etching said graphite component in an alkaline etchant;

electroplating said graphite component with a metal coating; and then

applying a solder pad to said metal coating as thus produced.

19. (previously presented) A method of applying a metal coating to graphite, comprising the steps of:

anodic etching said graphite in an alkaline etchant with an applied electrical potential in the range of 4V to 20V and a duration in the range of 5 to 90 minutes, with the actual duration being inversely proportional to the applied electrical potential; and then

electroplating said graphite with a metal to form the metal coating on said graphite.